Series Foreword

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This book is a first in several important ways. It is the first volume in a new series of publications, Chersones-
san Studies, undertaken by the Institute of Classical
Archaeology at the University of Texas, with sup-
port from the Packard Humanities Institute. It is the
first fruit of a pioneer collaboration between a foreign
classical archaeological mission and a major cultural
institution of the former Soviet Union, the National
Preserve of Tauric Chersonesos. And it is the first full
publication of a collection of funerary stelai, monu-
ments that rank among the most extensive and varied
examples of color use in ancient Greek art.

Chersonesos is located in Sevastopol on the tip of
the Crimea peninsula (*Figs. i, ii*), which until 1991
housed the most secret of Soviet naval bases—the
city was closed to most visitors until 1997. Buried in

the Tower of Zeno and fortification walls of ancient
Chersonesos (*Fig. iii*), the stelai were discovered in
the mid-20th century, but they remained virtually
unknown, both in the West and outside the immedi-
ate area. I “rediscovered” the stelai in 1992 on my first
visit to Chersonesos, and I believed that these excep-
tional monuments of Greek civilization on the Black
Sea should be made available to scholars everywhere,
inside and outside the former Soviet Republic.

This study of the stelai, begun in 1994, would have
been impossible in its present form had it not been for
two fortunate circumstances. The first was the par-
ticipation of Richard Posamentir, whose preparation
for this work included a dissertation on the painted
stelai of Attica. During a decade of assiduous docu-
mentation and restoration work from 2000 to 2010,

Figure ii Chersonesos, view to north, 2003. The remains of the Greek city surround St. Volodymyr's church, which was built on the site of the ancient agora.

Figure iii Fortification walls of Chersonesos, the Tower of Zeno in the center-right background.

he gained numerous insights that transformed a preliminary study into a work of impressive scholarship. Second was the support of the Packard Humanities Institute from 2000 onward, which made possible this volume, as well as the underwriting of a wide-ranging collaboration between the Institute of Classical Archaeology (ICA) and the National Preserve of Tauric Chersonesos (NPTC). The collaboration included excavation, conservation, historic preservation, and multifaceted technological innovation in the management of archaeological and archival resources. No archaeological project on this scale had ever been attempted by Western institutions in the territory of the former Soviet Union, either in Russia or Ukraine. Both the early years of this study and collaboration and those of the greatly expanded program sponsored by the Packard Humanities Institute (PHI) are of historical interest, so a brief account is perhaps in order.

My first trip to Chersonesos, in October 1992, was to attend a conference on Black Sea colonies. This

visit included a tour of the museum storerooms. I was concerned about the crowded conditions and lack of modern facilities and amenities, but also impressed by the great care the staff showed for their treasures, and by their knowledge of what they had. I grew to appreciate both the achievements of the Soviet years, which were considerable, and the limitations, which were understandable.

This was the first visit to Chersonesos by a Western archaeologist in eight decades. As boxes and drawers of artifacts were pulled out, the excitement of the guest and his hosts was palpable. There were many wonderful things. And then we came to “Fondi 4,” a storeroom in a wing of the converted 19th-century monastic bathhouse that was used for storing inscriptions and stone sculptures. Among these were the Hellenistic grave stelai that had been excavated thirty years earlier from the walls of the Tower of Zeno. There, illuminated by several bare light bulbs hanging from the roof beams, were scores of the stelai, many with traces of their original painted decoration. I realized at once that I was gazing on many vivid and extremely rare examples of the use of color in Greek art. At the end of my ten-day visit, a “summit” was called by Leonid Marchenko, the director of the Archaeological and Historical Museum (now NPTC), where we discussed five areas of possible collaboration between the Museum and the Institute of Classical Archaeology. The study of the stelai was one. I returned in 1993 to negotiate the full program of our collaboration with my colleague, Galina Nikolaenko, and Director Marchenko. It was to include the excavation of a farmhouse in the chora. Eventually we chose Site 151, which, along with two other manor excavations, will be among the future volumes of *Chersonesan Studies*.

Work began in 1994 on the excavation site and in Fondi 4, where, with photographer Chris Williams, I began to document the stelai and create the first catalog of the material. This experience is among the most pleasant memories of our early years at Chersonesos. The work was encouraged by the director and by the staff, who furnished much assistance. I remember with particular warmth hours spent in the archives with Nonna Krasovskaya and her staff, tracking down and studying the excavation records of 1960–1961, the conservation of the stelai in the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg (where several stelai remain), and the

Figure iv Watercolor reconstruction of stele (No. 6) made shortly after excavation (*left*) and composite photo of fragments (*right*). The stele is now in the State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.

fine watercolor renditions of the stelai made shortly after their excavation (*Fig. iv*). The resources of the Chersonesos Library and its unique collection were made available to me by its highly knowledgeable and hospitable librarian, Lucy Grinenko.

Fondi 4 was but one of several repositories containing still more stelai and architectural fragments. All were the bailiwick of the Fondi office. To Galina Zhestkova, who was head officer in 1994, to her assistants, and to her successor, Ludmila Golovchenko, I am forever indebted, especially for their patience and good spirits. The ritual of opening and closing the storerooms, with their Byzantine-era locks, punctuated a workday enlivened by the presence of two young volunteers, Dasha and Katya Dyatskov, and their parents, archaeologist Sergei Dyatskov and his charming wife, Tanya, whose summer base faced Fondi 4 across a vine-covered courtyard.

The Fondi Office, the Library, Archives, and Medieval Office were the foci of informal meetings of

scholars sharing cups of tea, ideas, and enthusiasm. From time to time Vitali Danilenko, professor of history at the Tauric National University at Simferopol, would pay a visit to offer advice and help locate undecorated fragments of the stelai and architecture that were stashed around the grounds of the Museum. He had been the assistant of Strezhlestkiy during the excavations of the Tower of Zeno in 1960–61 and had written his dissertation on the stelai. He graciously shared with me this paper and others on the subject.

The work of cataloging and study continued over the course of five summers between 1994 and 1998. All the time Chris Williams was recording the fragments of stelai and architecture, as well as the original watercolors. This was no easy feat, as the stelai and architectural elements were heavy and Fondi 4 was poorly illuminated—limitations that Chris overcame with ingenuity, patience, and good humor, winning the affection of all our colleagues at the Museum. The results of his labors are evident throughout this book.

At a 2000 conference in Thessaloniki, “Color in Greek Art” (organized by the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and the J. Paul Getty Museum), I had the singular good fortune to meet Richard Posamentir, whom I immediately asked to be a consultant in Chersonesos later in the year. I soon realized that these remarkable monuments would be better served if he, not I, were entrusted with their final publication. This turned out to be a wise decision. It was made easier—I still felt very attached to this material (individually and collectively)—by the fact that collaborative projects at the Preserve were growing in number and complexity and required my attention.

The study also involved other highly qualified participants, including John Twilley, a conservation scientist specializing in the study of pigments. His analysis of the paint on the stelai and architecture, made in connection with the Thessaloniki conference on color, is reprinted in this volume. The study of the inscriptions was entrusted to a colleague at the University of Texas, Paula Perlman, whose years of research in epigraphy and whose background in both Greek history and religion made her the ideal choice for reassessing onomastic and other questions about the inscriptions.

In 2002, as Richard recounts in his introduction, the roof of Fondi 4 had begun collapsing to the point that the sky was visible. Its contents were removed to

Figure v The new Packard Laboratory. *Above*, exterior; *below left*, display area on the first floor; *below right*, storage and research area on the second floor.

the Greek and Roman Galleries, once the monastery refectory, where some of the stelai had long been on display. Work began in 2003 on a modern storage facility on the site of the former bath building and Fondi 4. Construction continued until 2006, by which point the ceiling of the Greek and Roman Galleries was judged to be in danger of falling. The stelai were at last returned to their former location, now the site of the Packard Laboratory, a handsome building with state-of-the-art environmental monitoring

equipment and modern storage and display areas (*Fig. v*). An attractive exhibit of the finest examples of stelai and architecture was installed in the laboratory for its inauguration on June 20, 2006.

The Packard Laboratory, the first modern building on the site of Chersonesos since the 19th century, is the final first of this foreword. With it comes our wish that it will not be the last at Chersonesos.

Austin
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